

REMARKS

Claims 10-13, 27, and 29-33 have been deleted. As is described below, it appears that, with the above amendments, all of the remaining claims in this application -- that is, claims 1-9, 14-26, 28, and 34-38 -- are patentable, and early allowance of these pending claims is respectfully requested.

Paragraph 3 of the Office Action listed a set of corrections that should be made to the claims of the present application. All of these corrections have been made exactly as suggested except for the following minor changes:

-In claim 14, a semicolon rather than the suggested comma was inserted because the other grammatically parallel clauses ended with a semicolon.

-In claim 19, an "and" was placed after the next to the last clause, but that was not the clause that ended with "hierarchy;", but rather the next clause, which ended with "nodes;".

In claims 20, 22, 24, 34, and 37, a semicolon was added after the deleted period to separate successive clauses.

In Claims 18 and 22 not only were the initial " - " deleted from the last clause, but also a redundant word, "wherein".

In Claim 27, "and" was inserted at the end of the specified clause, but because words have been added to

the end of the clause, it does not occur after the word "pattern".

In Claim 37, "and" was added in two additional places, after two clauses, since each precedes the last element in a grammatical sequence.

Please note that in claim 20 the change from "and/or" to "and" is not meant to change the meaning of the claim but rather was made to comply with the Office Action's request to correct what it viewed as an informality. It is still intended that the claim's index heading nodes can have located under them index heading nodes or link nodes, or both, and it is believed that the current wording fits with this intention.

Paragraph 4 of the Office Action rejected claims 14-17 and 24-26 because of the confusing language of a quoted phrase which occurred in both independent Claims 14 and 24. In response this phrase has been rewritten to be more easily understood, as follows:

"there are a plurality of said parent nodes under which other nodes are ranked by said method, which parent nodes are, themselves, ranked under another of said parent nodes by said method"

It is hoped this change removes any undesirable indefiniteness and makes Claims 14 and 24 substantially easier to understand.

Paragraph 6 of the Office Action rejected Claims 1-4, 9-14, 18, and 27-33 under §103(a) as unpatentable over the Smith and Heckerman references.

Regarding claims 1 through 9, it should be pointed out that unlike all the other independent claims, Claim 1, as amended, describes a system in which the user interface allows a user to "explicitly order the relative ordinal ranking with each of a set of said nodes". By this is meant that the user interface allows the user to give an explicit ordinal rank (such as 1st, 2nd, 3rd,...) to each of a set of nodes under a parent node, such as by placing them in a sequential order by rank, or by associating a numeral or letter with each such node indicating its ordinal number or position.

It is true that Smith and Heckerman can be considered to allow a user to associate values with nodes, such as the number of times they interact with a node, such as by posting to a thread it represents, (in the case of Smith) or by indicating a degree of preference for a feature or product (in the case of Heckerman), but in neither of these instances is the ordering explicit.

Smith's system can indicate the relative size of such values that have been associated with an element, such as by the length of connection links in a visual display, but the user has to compare such lengths to determine any possible ordinal ranking. Similarly in Heckerman, although a user might associate values with different features or products, a user would have to perform a calculation, in the form of a series of value comparisons to make any relative ranking

explicit. The only ordinal ranking disclosed in Heckerman is one that is performed automatically by the system based on collaborative input. Heckerman does not disclose a user interface that allows a user to enter explicit ordinal ranking.

Since neither Smith or Heckerman disclose "a user interface enabling each of a plurality of users to explicitly order the relative ordinal ranking with each of a set of said nodes" It is respectfully submitted that Claim 1, and all the claims that depend from it (e.g., claims 2 through 13), are patentable, and should be allowed.

Regarding claims 10-13, they have been canceled to speed the prosecution of this application.

Regarding independent claim 14, although paragraph 6 of the Office Action stated that this claim has been rejected under §103(a), it appears this was an unintended typographical error for at least the following reasons:

- Paragraph 8 states that claim 14 is allowable;
- There is no discussion in the text of why independent claim 14 is not allowable under §103(a), although there is a rejection of this claim under §112, as has been mentioned above.
- There is no rejection under §103(a) of any of the claims 15-17 which depend from claim 14.

For all these reasons it appears the Office Action considered Claim 14 to contain allowable subject matter and, thus, that no response is necessary to the apparently

unintended statement that the claim had been rejected under §103(a).

Regarding claim 18, this claim, as amended, is clearly distinguished over Smith and Heckerman. It has been amended to recite a collaborative filtering method which includes

"providing a user interface enabling a user to:
"define a group of users by selecting which sets of one or more users are to be combined to form such a user group; and
"choose a selected user group from a set of such user groups that have been previously defined by the user; and
"said step of calculating a group ordinal ranking, calculates the ordinal ranking as a function of the selected group based on said values given to nodes by users of the selected user group."

It appears that in Smith one can see things like which news groups have been frequented by the users of another news groups. Thus, in a way, selecting a news group could be considered a selection of the people who use it and, thus, would allow a user to select to filter by different groups of people. Similarly in Heckerman changing a given user's preferences might change the set of people selected for collaborative filtering. The above quoted amendments, which relate to features described in the portion of the current application regarding FIG. 26, have been made to claim 18 to more clearly distinguish it from such prior art.

It does not appear that either Smith or Heckerman, or even the combination of both, suggest the new features recited

in amended Claim 18. And thus it is respectfully submitted that Claim 18, as amended, be allowed.

Regarding claim 22, this claim 22 recites

"calculating a group ordinal ranking...as a function of the rankings given to nodes by said group of user and as a function of the relationship of said rankings to [a user] selected time period".

There does not appear to be anything in the Office Action indicating that either Smith or Heckerman disclose such a feature. From a quick reading of both applications it appears neither discloses anything relating to a user selected time period. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that Claim 22 appears are patentable over even the combination of these two references.

Regarding Claim 27, this claim has been canceled to speed the prosecution of this application.

Regarding Claim 28, this claim recites

"providing a user interface for enabling a user to select, as a groups, the users who have selected to associate a given set of one or more of said values with a given node, and to select to address said message to said group".

It does not appear that either Smith or Heckerman, even if combined, teach or suggest this feature. They do not appear to have any facility for addressing a message to a selected group of users.

Regarding Claims 29-33, they have been canceled to speed the prosecution of this application.

Regarding Paragraph 7 of the Office Action, the inventor appreciates the acknowledgement that claims 5-8, 19, and 23 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all inherited limitations. In response, these claims have been amended to be in such an independent form.

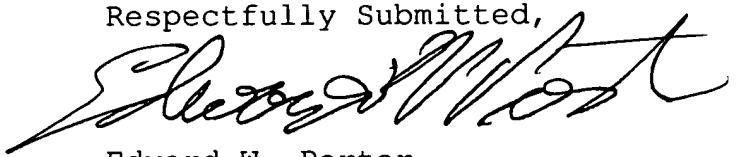
Regarding Paragraph 8, the inventor greatly appreciates the allowance of Claims 14-17, 20-21, 24-26, and 34-36.

Regarding Paragraph 9 of the Office Action, the inventor will withhold comment on the reasons indicated for allowable subject matter until a notice of allowance is received.

Regarding Paragraph 10, the undersigned will communicate with the official draft person to see what, if any changes to the drawing are actually needed or appropriate in this case, so that such drawing will be can be ready shortly after the issuance of the notice of allowance.

If you have any questions or problems with any of these documents, please contact me at the below phone number or address.

Respectfully Submitted,



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